

Premier Rachel Notley  
Office of the Premier  
307 Legislature Building  
10800 - 97 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

February 26, 2019

**Re: Open letter to the Honourable Rachel Notley, M.L.A., Premier of the province of Alberta**

Dear Premier Notley,

We are writing this letter as a group of concerned physicians who participate in the cardiovascular care of patients in Lethbridge and surrounding areas in the Alberta Health Services South Zone.

There has been much discussion recently regarding health care funding and planning in Alberta. In our daily practices as physicians, we strive to counsel patients and their families on lifestyle changes and effective medical treatments that will prevent cardiovascular disease. Though improvements in this area have been and are being made, morbidity and mortality from cardiovascular causes remain a common occurrence in our population. We want to take this opportunity to highlight deficiencies in our local cardiac services, in particular the lack of access to a local cardiac catheterization laboratory.

Services provided by cardiac catheterization laboratories are important and represent the standard of care in the developed world. The AHS South Zone serves a large catchment area of approximately 300,000 people. Unfortunately, we do not have access to a cardiac catheterization laboratory locally, and patients are referred to Calgary for interventional cardiac services. This includes patients who present with acute myocardial infarction (heart attack), heart failure and other acute cardiac medical emergencies, as well as patients who require outpatient invasive cardiac testing. Currently patients have to travel in excess of 2.5 hours plus to access cardiac catheterization services in Calgary.

The Internal Medicine group at Chinook Regional Hospital have been advocating for a cardiac catheterization laboratory since at least 2010. We will have the patient volume required to support a cardiac catheterization laboratory, locally we have the hospital space already available for this to be built, and we will certainly be able to recruit the expertise to operate the lab. A cardiac catheterization laboratory is an urgent and fundamental need in our community. It will serve to:

- Enhance patient and family experience
- Provide access to a proven standard of care close to home
- Improve patient outcomes for those affected by acute cardiac conditions
- Assist in waitlist reduction for patients requiring cardiac catheterization
- Recruit cardiology expertise to an under-served area

We call upon those elected to represent our community and province to consider this important investment as part of the overall health care strategy and funding for Albertans in the South Zone. We realize there are fiscal constraints within our system and competing priorities that require broad evaluation and prioritization. However, your attention and review of this critical gap in the cardiovascular care we provide to patients in this area is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
The physicians of the Internal Medicine Department  
Chinook Regional Hospital